Illustrating Interests: Exploring Comic Reading Preferences Among University Students

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Methodology

In this study, a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies was employed to explore the reading preferences of university students about digital and traditional comic format (Cresswell, 2009). Two stages of data collection were carried out so that a thorough analysis could be performed. During the first phase, a survey questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data about the preferences of students for traditional and digital comics. 50 students from the Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT) program and 50 students from the Bachelor of Arts in Literature (BAL) program participated in the survey, which used a Likert scale to measure preference levels (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). According to Ho (2024), focus group discussions (FGDs) allow for dynamic interaction and offer deeper insights. In the second phase to gather qualitative data focus groups discussion with 12 students—six from BIT and six from BAL—were conducted. Their perspectives, thoughts, and experiences of the students with comic reading were examined in these discussions (Faza, 2020). After that, the thematic analysis approach by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to identify key themes and patterns in the qualitative data. By utilizing a mixed-method approach, quantitative results and qualitative insights might be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting students' preferences for reading comic books (Wicaksono, 2023).

For the qualitative data obtained from the focus group discussions, Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was employed. Thematic analysis involves systematically identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. Initially, the transcripts from the focus group discussions was thoroughly read and reread to be familiarized with the data. Then, an initial coding process was conducted, where segments of data relevant to the research questions was systematically coded. Following this, codes was organized into potential themes, which was then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the research objectives. Through an iterative process of reviewing, refining, and defining themes, a final thematic map was generated, capturing the main patterns, relationships, and insights emerging from the qualitative data.

Context

The study was conducted at Cebu Technological University - Argao Campus, located in Argao, Cebu, Philippines. The campus has a diverse student population, with approximately 5,000 students enrolled in various programs. The Bachelor of Arts in Literature (BAL) and Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT) programs were selected for this study to provide a broad range of perspectives from students with varying academic backgrounds and interests. The university setting provided an ideal environment for this research, as it allowed the researchers to capture a range of preferences influenced by academic discipline, technological proficiency, and exposure to different forms of media. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative data collections within this context enabled the researchers to explore how university students engage with comics as a medium for both entertainment and education.

Results and Discussions

**READING PREFERENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS AS TO TRADITIONAL COMICS AND DIGITAL COMICS**

The tables presented below is the level of readership preferences and readership preference interval of the university students in terms of both traditional comics and digital comics, showing the difference between the respondents’ comic readership preferences.

1. University Students’ Level of Readership Preference on the Two Comic Formats

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| READINGPREFERENCES | MEAN | STANDARDDEVIATION | LEVEL OFPREFERENCES |
| Traditional Comics | 3.97 | .06 | Preferred |
| Digital Comics | 3.99 | .05 | Preferred |

* 1. Readership Preference Intervals

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MEAN | LEVEL OF PREFERENCE |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1.00-1.80 | Least Preferred |
| 1.81-3.40 | Less Preferred |
| 3.41-4.20 | Preferred |
| 4.21-5.00 | Highly Preferred |

The mean preference score for digital comics is 3.99, approximately higher than the 3.97 for traditional comics. The findings show that, on average, individuals prefer digital comics over traditional ones by a certain percentage. The suggestion that respondents prefer digital comics, yet this preference is not significantly stronger than traditional comics is made apparent by the slight difference in mean scores.

In traditional comics, the standard deviation is 0.06, indicating that respondents’ preferences are quite uniform. With regards to digital comics, the statistic is marginally lower at 0.05, indicating a very tiny reduction in respondent preference variability. Digital comics have a smaller standard deviation than traditional comics, which indicates that respondents’ preferences were less dispersed and that they were more inclined to choose digital comics over traditional comics.

Both ratings fall into the “Preferred” category, indicating that respondents tend to prefer traditional as well as digital comic formats. However, the fact that both have been classified as “Preferred” indicates that, based on their mean scores, both are exceptionally comparable.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE RESPONDENTS READING PREFERENCES AS TO TRADITIONAL COMICS AND DIGITAL COMICS**

1. Facilitating Factors Influencing the Respondents’ Reading Preferences of Traditional Comics and Digital Comics

The tables presented below shows the factors influencing the respondents’ reading preferences of both traditional and digital from the results of thematic content analysis gathered from the focused group discussion.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FACILITATING FACTORS OF TRADITIONAL COMICS | |
| Factors | Significant Statements |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Appreciation of Artwork | • It's the artwork and collectability because I love collecting valuable things, especially topics in comics that I like.  • It's the artwork because I appreciate the author's drawing.  • The artwork is what catches my eye. I appreciate good art.  • The way they draw and the quality of colors and design.  • The detailed artwork and the quality of the storytelling.  • It's all about the artwork. I enjoy looking at the drawings, especially the older comics.  • I focus on the artwork and story.  • I like vintage feels, and it's enjoyable to see the artwork by the author. |
| Convenience | • Can enjoy browsing and selecting comics.  • I value the sense of tangibility. Feeling the book in your hands is essential for me.  • Being physically present and collectible.  • Visually appealing and collectible.  • Offer a sense of nostalgia and are better for long-term reading.  • Has a charm and permanence.  • More immersive and collectible.  • Better for long-term reading.  • Especially with manga, the unique thing is the quality of the cover and paper used.  • It's the nostalgia. It brings back memories of when I started reading comics.  • Can be read anywhere and offline.  • Less time-consumption of gadgets.  • Safe from radiation exposure and eye-friendly.  • Smell of books. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| FACILITATING FACTORS OF DIGITAL COMICS | |
| Factors | Significant Statements |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Artwork | • The influencing factor for digital is the improved artwork, better than traditional.  • It looks like watching anime, very clear, and the content is well-presented.  • The ability to zoom enhances the artwork. |
| Convenience | • It's easier to access. Convenience is the key, as you can choose what you want to read or watch.  • Convenience is important, it's much easier online than traditional.  • They are easier to access.  • They are quick. The convenience is there, more convenient than traditional as you don't have to go to a bookstore.  • The ease of access and payment is more convenient because you can pay quickly through online platforms.  • Interactivity is also important as you can have leisure time with audio while doing other things.  • It is cost-effective.  • I value convenience, variety, and interactivity in digital comics.  • Convenience and accessibility are essential, and there are plenty of options to choose from.  • Convenience is key for me as a digital reader. Reading on my phone is very convenient.  • I prefer digital comics because of their easy access, variety, and fast updates.  • Are portable and less prone to damage.  • More accessible and affordable.  • Can zoom the panel and the dialogue.  • Tools used to enhance graphics.  • Chapters are cheap. |

**Conclusion**

The research findings indicate an inclination of university students toward digital comics over traditional comics. The factors influencing this preference include convenience and inconvenience, artwork appreciation, and poor artwork. Combining both quantitative and qualitative data gives breadth to understanding the reasons that shape students’ preferences for such formats of comics. The findings are further supported by the grounding of data analysis in theoretical frameworks, and the capability of providing a comprehensive picture of how visual elements, media experiences, and user behavior influence university students’ comic preferences. Ultimately, such research has a balanced approach weighing aesthetic enjoyment with convenience in strategy development for reading comics among university students.